



WORKFORCE SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF VETERANS

JANUARY 1, 2009

ISSUE 9-1

Is one more Happy New Year wish to all of you just too much? Oh well. Too late.

We are in the midst of many events and economic influences that have a powerful impact on what we do and how we do it. The “R” word, economic instability, new administration at the national level coming into power; all these plus more should cause us to review our processes, available resources, networking opportunities, consider training opportunities (for ourselves and our clients), and more. Add to these events, the prospect of an overwhelming number of Veterans beginning their journey home. Are we as ready as we can be? Have we taken the necessary steps within our power to provide services to these deserving individuals? Granted, we want sustainable and meaningful employment for every individual that walks through our doors. However, that special group of individuals we work with, our Veterans, may require that little extra. Go ahead and give it to them. We took an opportunity this past quarter to recognize our Veterans for one day. Let’s make sure we stay focused on the goal.

We have some potential opportunities to “get the word out” about what Workforce Services does and what we as a force have to offer our communities. Whether it is a Career Fair, a pre-deployment briefing for a National Guard or Reserve unit in your community, a local event that you coordinate, or something I am working on which is getting us in your local community armories on a drill weekend to show your stuff to service members and their families. Of course it takes time, initiative and commitment from everyone. For all of that and your continued support, I thank you.

Brad Nelson
Veterans Program Manager 444-1630

Did you know???

DVOP—Disabled Veteran Outreach Program. This term is sometimes misused in identifying an individual, rather than a program. The DVOP specialist’s role is to facilitate intensive services to Veterans with special employment and training needs (barriers to employment). These services include conducting an assessment; develop and document a plan of action; provide career guidance; coordinate supportive services; establish contacts with local businesses; provide referrals to training and job vacancies and conduct outreach activities.

LVER—Local Veterans Employment Representative (Program). Unlike the acronym “DVOP”, LVER actually does refer to an individual. The LVER specialist works with other service providers to promote Veterans as job seekers who have highly marketable skills and experience; they advocate for Veterans for employment and training opportunities with business, industry and community based organizations by participating in a variety of outreach activities such as career fairs, coordinating with unions, apprenticeship programs and business organizations; they establish and maintain regular contact with employers; they conduct training to Workforce Services staff on Veterans programs and issues, and they plan and facilitate the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

The Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act (Chapter 33 GI Bill) goes into effect on August 1, 2009. See the article on page 2 of this newsletter, or visit www.gibill.va.gov for more information.

DirectEmployers Association and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) formed an alliance in March 2007 to provide an employer-funded, jointly-administered National Labor Exchange. Working in strict compliance with U.S. Department of Labor guidelines and regulations, JobCentral National Labor Exchange provides employers and states, working together, an online tool to better manage our nation’s vast talent resources. It helps companies build their workforce and comply with State and Federal regulations such as Affirmative Action Program objectives, Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCCP) obligations and Veterans hiring goals. Check out:

www.jobcentral.com or
www.vetjobcentral.com

There are multiple websites that cater to Veterans/Disabled Veterans. Check out www.jofdav.com. This is a 501 © 3 Public Charity organization.

The Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE) exists to improve the business climate for Veterans, to minimize access barriers and to inform the public about the benefits of working with Veteran-owned small businesses. Check out www.vetbiz.gov.

Tell your Veterans about
www.vetsuccess.gov/

NATIONAL NEWS

VA To Deploy Mobile Counseling Centers across America

50 Motor Coaches to Bring Services Closer to Veterans

(News release from the VA website)

WASHINGTON – The first of a fleet of 50 new mobile counseling centers for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vet Center program was put into service today (October 22, 2008) with the remainder scheduled to be activated over the next three months.

“Our widespread distribution of this fleet from coast to coast marks a new chapter in VA's innovation to reach rural and underserved veterans with high-quality readjustment counseling,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

Each vehicle will be assigned to one of VA's existing Vet Centers, enabling the center to improve access to counseling by bringing services closer to veterans.

The 38-foot motor coaches, which have spaces for confidential counseling, will carry Vet Center counselors and outreach workers to events and activities to reach veterans in broad geographic areas, supplementing VA's 232 current Vet Centers, which are scheduled to increase to 271 facilities by the end of 2009.

Vet Centers, operated by VA's Readjustment Counseling Service, provide non-medical readjustment counseling in easily accessible, consumer-oriented facilities, addressing the social and economic dimensions of post-war needs. This includes psychological counseling for traumatic military-related experiences and family coun-

seling when needed for the veteran's readjustment.

The team leader at each Vet Center will develop an outreach plan for use of the vehicle within that region, not being limited to the traditional catchment area of a particular Vet Center.

These vehicles will be used to provide outreach and direct readjustment counseling at active-duty, reserve and National Guard activities, including post-deployment health reassessments for returning combat service members.

The vehicles will also be used to visit events typically staffed by local Vet Center staff, including homeless "stand downs," veteran community events, county fairs, and unit reunions at sites ranging from Native American reservations to colleges.

While most of their use will be in Vet Centers' delivery of readjustment counseling services, the local manager may arrange with VA hospitals or clinics in the region to provide occasional support for health promotion activities such as health screenings.

The normal counseling layout can be converted to support emergency medical missions, such as hurricanes and other natural disasters.

The 50 vehicles are being manufactured for VA by Farber Specialty Vehicles of Columbus, Ohio.

(Montana is scheduled to receive two mobile counseling centers, one located in Missoula and one in Billings)

VA Outlines Plans for New GI Bill Implementation

Military.com—November 25, 2008

On Tuesday, November 18, 2008, the Department of Veterans Affairs offered details on their implementation plans

for the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008.

Keith Wilson, Director of the Office of Education Service, unveiled their interim plan to meet the requirements of benefits delivery in the short-term and long term.

According to Wilson, VA has begun improving the current information technology (IT) system internally in order to meet the August 2009 deadline and he expects to keep this system in place until November 2010.

Wilson told Congress that the plan relies on increased automation and an expected increase in staffing of as much as 400 employees. The report indicates that VA will begin hiring in January and expects to be fully staffed by March 2009.

Mr. Wilson also detailed their long-term plan, expected to go into effect near the end of 2010. The long-term plan will rely on support from the Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) to help develop a permanent rules-based automated system.

Success Story

Paula (not her real name) is a single mother who graduated from MSU-Billings with a MS in Psychology in December 2007. Paula is also a VA Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) Veteran.

She was eager and receptive to the VA Voc Rehab Case Management job seeking process and willing to utilize all job seeking methods as recommended by her assigned DVOP.

Success story cont'd on page 5

TRAINING NEWS

*From Vaune Shelbourn, Director,
National Veterans Training Institute
(NVTI)*

NVTI is using technology to disseminate information to our customers. We released two Podcasts in the last couple of months giving LVERs/DVOPs information on working with veterans with disabilities. The Podcasts (sound only) can be found at: <http://podcast.nvti.cudenver.edu/>

NVTI has the core classes for LVERs/DVOPs, Labor Employment Specialist Training, Case Management, Promoting Partnerships for Employment, Veterans Benefits On-Line and the Transition Assistance Program Course, all held here in Denver.

NVTI has been getting questions on what we have to offer besides the classes held in Denver. Besides those core LVER/DVOP classes, we have training that can be available to states at their request. All our classes offerings are listed under training on our homepage:

<http://www.nvti.cudenver.edu/home/homePage.htm>.

Also to get the information out in a different form of media, we have put two taped webinars together on what trainings NVTI has to offer in-state. Please review the webinars (sound and video), all feedback is appreciated.

In-state webinar 1: <https://connect.cuonline.edu/p96682591/>

In-state webinar 2: <https://connect.cuonline.edu/p47068027/>

To maximize NVTI's funds, most LVER/DVOP course offerings are conducted at the training site in Denver. But all of our training courses are available, including the new leadership course for supervisors and program partners, through the National

Learning Center, NVTI's home within the University. Many states have used funds available to them to bring our training to their state.

IN STATE TRAINING NEWS

Amee Bush from the Bitterroot office completed the Labor Employment Specialist (LES) course on October 3rd and the Case Management (CM) course on December 5th. Both courses were conducted at the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) in Denver, CO.

Gary Swartz from the Missoula office completed the Promoting Partnerships for Employment (PPE) course on November 21st, also at NVTI.

Congratulations to both of you. Training for our DVOP/LVER staff at NVTI continues in order to bring them into compliance with existing position requirements.

We are currently working on bringing NVTI to Montana to conduct the "Leadership for the Integration and Implementation of Veterans Services" (LIIVS) course. The projected dates of this training are April 6—10. The intended audience is Office Managers and supervisors of the DVOP/LVER staff.

Additionally, we are looking at trying to bring the PPE course to the state in order to make it available to as many Workforce Consultants as possible. This course is intended specifically for Veteran representatives, but is generic enough to be extremely valuable to all Workforce Service staff. More information to follow. For course information, go to the NVTI website: <http://www.nvti.cudenver.edu/home/homePage.htm>

If you aren't familiar with (and using) "Veterans Upward Bound" (VUB) of Montana as one of our many resources for assisting Veterans with their career goals, you (and the Veteran) may be missing out.

Besides offering free college prep classes at several campuses around the state, they have information on many other service providers, organizations and programs specifically for Veterans. They also publish an extremely informative monthly newsletter. Check out their website at:

<http://vubmt.com>

Select Newsletter on the top-line menu, then;
Select whatever month's newsletter you prefer.

In December's VUB issue:

- Spring Semester schedule
- Scholarship opportunities for Veteran transfer students to U of M
- New homeless Veterans facility coming to Billings, MT
- A ton of other information

Workforce Consultant VA On the Job Training (OJT) Program nearing completion

On the Job Training (OJT) and Apprenticeship Programs can be a viable (and preferred) option to classroom type training for many Veterans. For Veterans (and current service members) who have remaining GI Bill benefits, this option has potentially substantial financial benefits.

Working with the State VA Approving Agency and the Bitterroot Job Service office, we have created an OJT program for the Workforce Consultant position. What does this mean? It means that once this training program is approved by the VA, we have the means to assist any GI Bill eligible Veteran who is hired as a Workforce Consultant in Montana to utilize their GI Bill benefits.

OJT cont'd on page 5



Submitted by Byron Erickson, Director, Veteran Employment and Training (DVET) representative for Montana

Understanding the DART Report

The DART report is a management tool that is used by the federal government and managers to monitor the success of all the local Workforce Centers, the LVER/DVOP's, and the Workforce Services Division as a whole statewide. The report numbers are compared to the Veteran Negotiated Performance Standards (negotiated by this office and your Veteran Program Manager) which give us

goals to work toward and a measuring tool to analyze our successes in assisting veterans. Below are our performance targets for Program Year 2009.

Keeping track of your performance measures is at your finger tips! You can pull up the DART report on MWORKS. Go to "Reports" at the top of the page. This provides a drop down window which says "Federal Reports." The reports to view are the 9200's and VETS 200's.

The federal report allows you to pull up your office, as well as the "ALL", or the state performance as a whole.

If you look at lines 19, 22, and 25 on the VETS 200's (LVER/DVOP Reports) it will say "RATE." That is the percentage of performance used for the Negotiated Performance Standards.

The acronym of TSMs means Total Service Members. However, for our tracking purposes we are using "Total Vets and Eligible Persons". You may follow the rate across the line to check out the other categories tracked, such as Disabled Veterans.

The 9002 tracks the office(s) performance. The one to look at is the ETA 9002 D. View the "RATE" lines 6 and 12. Go to the TSM's and other columns across the line to find out how you are doing. Yes, the DVOP/LVER numbers are rolled into the office numbers.

DVET Corner cont'd on page 5

Performance Targets for Jobs for Veterans State Grant Funded Staff	
DVOP:	
Disabled Veterans Entered Employment Rate (EER)	64%
Disabled Veterans Employment Retention Rate (ERR)	83%
LVER:	
Recently Separated Veterans EER	55%
Recently Separated Veterans ERR	83%
DVOP/LVER Consolidated:	
Veterans EER - Weighted	69%
Veterans ERR	82%
Veterans Average Earnings (AE)	\$13,296.00
Performance Targets for One-Stop Services for Veterans	
Veterans EER	75%
Veterans ERR	85%
Veterans AE	\$14,283.00
Disabled Veterans EER	65%
Disabled Veterans ERR	81%
Disabled Veterans AE	\$14,620.00

Success story cont'd from page 2

Her goal was to acquire employment at a VA Center as a Psychology Tech as she is dedicated to assisting fellow Veterans.

After many months of job seeking, travel, DVOP follow-ups and interviews she obtained an interview and was hired at the VA Medical Center in Lebanon, PA as a Psychology Tech. She entered employment on September 15, 2008 with a starting salary of \$33,135/yr with full benefits.

A result of coordination between supportive services was enhancement of Paula's job seeking opportunities. Below are examples of some of these coordinated efforts:

VA Voc Rehab Case Management staff provided recommendations, assistance, and intensive job seeking services plus coordinated with the Billings Job Service Workforce Investment Act (WIA) counselors to provide, administer, and monitor the Veteran with the required VA Voc Rehab testing processes; provide timely follow-up to check job seeking progress and status; coordinated with the MT Voc Rehab Counselor in Billings, MT; coordinated with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Coordinator at Ft Harrison, MT.

The Voc Rehab Counselor in Billings provided Paula with vital services and benefits to defray the cost of moving expenses from Billings to the Lebanon, PA VA Center including U-Haul rental, fuel, food and Motel expenses.

The VR&E Coordinator at Ft Harrison advised the assigned DVOP of the Veterans relocation process and obtained and provided appropriate VA documentation required by the MT Voc Rehab Counselor in order to obtain services and moving expenses.

The OJT plan is built for the position, not the individual Veteran. Therefore, the plan (once approved) can be utilized at any Workforce Services office in Montana. The hard part of writing the plan is completed. Representatives of the VA State Approving Agency have done an initial review of the plan and position with no discrepancies. We anticipate that this OJT plan will move forward to the VA Regional Office in St Louis, MO sometime in January.

This is truly great news for our Veterans. However, we can do more. This should be just the beginning. There are numerous opportunities out there for us to create relationships with businesses (as well as state agencies) to promote this program. We should be reminding Veterans when they walk through our doors that they may have unused GI Bill benefits available to them through employment. There may be Veterans we have worked with in the past that are currently employed in a position that could qualify for a VA OJT or Apprenticeship Program. Make the contacts, ask the questions, help our Veterans.

For more information on the Workforce Consultant OJT plan, contact me (Brad Nelson) at 444-1630 or bnelson@mt.gov. For more information in general on the VA OJT and Apprenticeship programs in Montana, contact Tom Cummins at 444-4122 or Bruce Knutson at 444-0691.

DVET Corner cont'd from page 4

In FY 2009 we are beginning to use a weighted formula to determine effectiveness. While the first year the performance is a "hold harmless" tracking number, it may be implemented in the next fiscal year as a

standard. You can go to www.dol.gov/vets/ web site to access the Grant Based Performance Measure Weighting Tool on the right hand side of the page under "Jobs for Veterans State Grants." Click on WTD-EER Calculation Tool and it will guide you in finding the weighted rate for your Entered Employment Rate. It is very easy to use; I even did it without a problem.

It is true that achieving all the goals does not translate into getting additional funding to serve Veterans. Additional funding for staffing is being worked on through other means. In spite of staffing shortages however, we must continue to get the job done. Thank you for serving our nations heroes, our veterans.

How are you and the office doing in obtaining these objectives? How are you doing in comparison to the state as a whole? Utilizing the DART report helps you get the answers to these questions.

Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) has published the Final Rule for Priority of Service for Veterans. See below:

The notice has been posted to Inside the Insider from: <http://insider.dli.mt.gov/wsd/resources/veterans.asp> and in the WSD Veterans section from: <http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/veterans/vetresources.asp> and a cross link under features on the WSD home page. <http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/veterans/vetpriorityofservice.pdf>

A New Look for the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) at Malmstrom AFB

Contributed by Joe Fletcher (LVER at the Great Falls Job Service office), with final comments by Brad Nelson

December found our TAP taking a slightly different approach for a specific

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group of folks.

Malmstrom requested that Joe conduct an Executive Level TAP. Joe responded by taking a very positive approach to that request. Joe, using his experience and knowledge knew that the needs of the more senior in rank group are different than those of more junior rank.

Using that knowledge, he reached out into the local community to obtain presenters that were or had been at the same level as the attendees. Those presenters included Gary Warren, Workforce Services Bureau Chief, who shared with the group some of his personal experiences in seeking a new career after the military along with giving them some tips about how to be successful.

Following his presentation, Marla Hagen accompanied by Lee Reynolds, conducted a workshop on interviewing techniques and conducted a mock interview. Kenneth Vansickle, from Edward Jones, Inc. made a presentation on post military opportunities along with stressing the importance of networking and having a well prepared resume. Additionally, Daniel Shannon, a local attorney who specializes in estate planning provided a very informative presentation which was well received. As a note, one of the senior group commanders made the following comment. "He is absolutely outstanding, keep him coming back."

Mark Willmarth, from Visions West, Inc. conducted a workshop on Successful Resume Writing with a brief overview of how to properly prepare a cover letter. Finally, Brian Kaufman from Kaufman's Men's Wear provided a presentation on "Dressing For Success" using a wide variety of suits, and accessories to demonstrate how to mix and match.

Joe received a number of complimentary comments such as, "Joe Fletcher is an excellent facilitator and I respect his knowledge and value." "Great Program, I learned things I had no knowledge about." "Great hand-outs, Thanks Joe. Nine of the participants rated the overall program "Outstanding" with the other eight rating it "Excellent."

TAP is typically offered to all military personnel from Malmstrom AFB, the Air National Guard, Army National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Navy Reserve, Army Reserve, and Coast Guard (yes we have Coast Guard in Montana) who are either approaching retirement or ending their military service. Spouses of these individuals are also encouraged to attend. Joe facilitates this training once per month. This past month's version was specifically built to address the senior ranks of both officer and enlisted personnel.

Joe has been teaching TAP for more years than, well, let's just say many years. What is amazing is the level of consistency and enthusiasm, newness of information and professionalism he has maintained over all these years. Not an easy accomplishment. The importance and relevance of conducting this program every month is sometimes lost in how smoothly he has managed to do it. In many cases, the TAP (and Joe specifically) is the last liaison contact these service members and Veterans will have prior to them leaving the comforts of military life.

So on behalf of Central Office, the Workforce Services Bureau and Department of Labor;

THANK YOU JOE

Thank you to all who contributed to this month's newsletter. There are newsworthy events related to Veterans and their issues happening out there everyday.

So, if you can read this, it means I had space available for additional notes, information, articles, comments, anything. If you have any news that pertains to Veterans or their issues, let me have it. You never know who will benefit from your contribution. Send them to:

bnelson@mt.gov

Or give me a call at 444-1630.

And when the opportunity presents itself (on the street, in the airport, in the supermarket or a department store) thank a Veteran for their service.